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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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10/667,741

09/22/2003

Bill H. Hilf

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AKERMAN SENTERFITT

P. O. BOX 3188

WEST PALM BEACH, FL 33402-3188

EXAMINER

ANWARI, MACEEH

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PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No. 10/667,741	Applicant(s) HILF ET AL.	
	Examiner MACEEH ANWARI	Art Unit 2444	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 16 January 2009.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1- 10 and 23- 34 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1- 10 and 23- 34 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

1. This action is in response to communications file on 1/16/2009. **Claim(s) 1** has been amended. **Claim(s) 11- 22** have been canceled and **claim(s) 23- 34** have been newly added. No other claims have been amended, added, or canceled. Accordingly, **claim(s) 1- 10 and 23- 34** are pending.

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

2. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 1/16/2009 has been entered.

Response to Arguments

3. Applicant's arguments filed 1/16/2009 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. In substance the applicant argues that **Nachman** fails to teach or disclose that a group of users formed based on an identified shared interest engage in real time communication.

4. First, the claim language does not (necessarily) preclude engaging in real time communication within/among each other (i.e. "each session being associated with a different user"). Secondly, the recitation of "communication" is broad, which can be viewed/defined in numerous ways, for example 1) the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs, or simply as 2)

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something imparted, interchanged, or transmitted. Furthermore, the terms “affinity” and “shared interest” are in a like manner, broad; the applicant attempts to limit affinity by defining it as a shared interest. A shared interest can further be viewed as 1) something that concerns, involves, draws the attention of, or arouses the curiosity of a person or persons. In that case, the examiner asserts that the WWW page itself is a shared interest among the viewers (i.e. users), and since **Nachman** provides a method for sending real-time messages between viewers it provides for a mechanism of real time communication.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

5. 35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

Claim(s) 1- 10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 as not falling within one of the four statutory categories of invention. While the claims recite a series of steps or acts to be performed, a statutory “process” under 35 U.S.C. 101 must (1) be tied to particular machine, or (2) transform underlying subject matter (such as an article or material) to a different state or thing. See page 10 of *In Re Bilski* 88 USPQ2d 1385. The instant claims are neither positively tied to a particular machine that accomplishes the claimed method steps nor transform underlying subject matter, and therefore do not qualify as a statutory process. The computer implemented method including steps of monitoring, identifying and facilitating is broad enough that the claim could be completely performed mentally, verbally or without a machine nor is any transformation apparent.

Claims 33- 34 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claims lack the necessary physical articles or objects to constitute a machine or a manufacture within the meaning of 35 USC 101. They are clearly not a series of steps or acts to be a process nor are they a combination of chemical compounds to be a composition of matter. As such, they fail to fall within a statutory category. They are, at best, functional descriptive material *per se*.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

6. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

7. **Claims 1- 10 & 23- 34** are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by **Nachman et al.** (hereinafter **Nachman**) U.S. Publication No.: 2001/0027474 A1.

Claim 1: A computer-implemented method for facilitating real time communications for Internet users having a shared interest comprising the steps of:

monitoring a plurality of user sessions, each session being associated with a different user (**Abstract and par. 12- 13 & 44-45; specific users and user authentication**);

identifying at least one real-time affinity among the user sessions based on session data associated with currently active user sessions, an affinity being defined as a shared interest among users of two or more user sessions

(Abstract and par. 2; real time communications, specific users and grouped users) ;

responsive to said affinity identification, forming a user group for users of user sessions having an identified affinity **(Par. 17; group services and forums)**; and

facilitating the users of the user group to engage in real time communication **(par. 14- 17; groups services and forums)**.

Claim 2: wherein the facilitating step comprises the step of providing access to an interaction application for at least two of said plurality of user sessions responsive to said identified affinity **(Par. 14- 17; routing through WSM and forums)**.

Claim 3: Wherein said prompting step further comprises the step of providing access to an interaction application for at least two of said plurality of user sessions responsive to said identified affinity **(Par. 14- 17; forums)**.

Claim 4: Wherein said prompting step further comprises the step of establishing a communication pathway to facilitate real time communications between users associated with said at least two user sessions **(Par. 2 and 14- 17; real time communications and forums)**.

Claim 5: Wherein said step of establishing a communication pathway further comprises the step of opening at least one of a chat session, an instant messaging session, a newsgroup, and a shared application **(Figure 1 and par. 5 & 17; Forums and instant messaging)**.

Claim 6: Wherein said identifying step includes the step of evaluating session cookies associated with said user sessions (**Par. 37; cookies and client information**).

Claim 7: Wherein said identifying step includes the step of evaluating session objects associated with said user sessions (**Par. 37; cookies and client information**).

Claim 8: Wherein said session objects comprise at least one datum selected from the group consisting of a URL which has been accessed, an amount of time on-line, an item in a shopping cart, and a user identifier (**Figure 7; items 700 & 704**).

Claim 9: Wherein said user identifier comprises at least one of a postal code, an area code, a city, a county, a state, a province, a country and a continent (**Figure 7; items 700 & 704**).

Claim 10: wherein the facilitating step includes presenting a user interface in the user sessions of the user group (**Par. 17 and 44; forums and instant messaging**).

As per **claims 23- 34** they all list substantially the same elements as those recited in **claims 1- 10** and are therefore rejected using the same rationale as applied to **claims 1- 10**.

Examiner Note: Examiner has cited particular columns and line numbers in the references as applied to the claims above for the convenience of the applicant. Although the specified citations are representative of the teachings of the art and are applied to the specific limitations within the individual claim, other passages and figures may apply as well. It is respectfully requested from the applicant in preparing responses, to fully consider the references in its entirety

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as potentially teaching of all or part of the claimed invention, as well as the context of the passage as taught by the prior art or disclosed by the examiner.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to MACEEH ANWARI whose telephone number is (571)272-7591. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday 7:30-5:00 PM ES.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, William Vaughn can be reached on 571-272-3922. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

M.A.

/William C. Vaughn, Jr./

Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 2444